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*World Environmental History*  
*Hist 554/ESTU 587*  
*Winter Quarter, 2008*

This seminar will review and study several major problems in environmental history on a global scale. The organizing theme will be the history of "exchange" - biological and cultural - of organisms and of ideas about what to do with them. The study of environmental history as the history of exchange on a global scale will allow us to focus on key issues and problem areas in environmental history and to develop a conceptual understanding of recent developments in environmental history -- rather than mainly surveying the environmental history of a particular nation-state or locale. National governments, political boundaries, and "cultures" will be taken into account in our discussion of global or comparative environmental developments and forces, but will not provide the framework for organizing our discussion of these.

In the last decade, environmental history, once rooted in the history of the American West, has thrived as a field with a global focus and content. Though environmental history has never been constrained by national boundaries, the field in the United States has nonetheless been connected with a set of assumptions about the nation-state that have underpinned much of the practice of "American" history. In the last twenty years, American historians have begun to examine and interrogate these assumptions. Some scholarship in environmental history has always taken for granted the porousness or relative insignificance of national boundaries to organisms other than humans. Other scholarship in this field has both demonstrated the power of ideas about national culture at the same time that they have examined and undermined those ideas. This seminar will attempt to encompass these trends by examining first of all the historical process by which organisms have been transported from one place to another on the globe by humans (whether by design or by accident), and the significance of these transfers. We will then look at how ideas about the environment have also been transported from one culture to another, applied either as an imperial overlay or as a creole hybrid, and what this has meant for local environments and those living in them. Political boundaries have made a difference, but have not contained, these processes.

At the same time, we'll be able to examine some of the key concepts and historical issues that are of importance to environmental history - how organisms (including human) "adapt" to environmental change and the environmental and cultural consequences of adaptation; the meaning of "local" and "native," and of "global" and "cosmopolitan" (and of "exotic" in comparison to "indigenous"); the significance of property regimes in the history of environmental change; how environmental "science" has derived from the study of environments but has also been a powerful instrument for shaping natural environments; how food cultures have been shaped by exchange and who we are in terms of what we eat; and how an international environmental movement has evolved out of several significant national environmental traditions. The seminar will look at the scholarship that studies out how the exchange of biological organisms, the transfer of ideas about the environment, and

the development of transnational environmental issues and policies intersect - and why it is important to do environmental history in this way in the first place.

### Required Readings:

You'll need to procure, from your local bookstore or an international online bookseller, the following books for this course:

- Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge, any edition).
- Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the British Atlantic World* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006).
- Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) (optional purchase - also on reserve).
- Richard Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World* (Rowan & Littlefield, Concise Rev. Ed., 2007).
- Shepherd Krech, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (Norton, 1999).
- Ramachandra Guha, *Environmentalism, A Global History* (Longman, 2000).
- Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (Penguin, 2007).

Other readings will be available on reserve.

### Course Requirements and Grading:

1) Fifty-five percent of your grade will be contingent on your participation in seminar discussions and on the quality of two 2-5 page, *single-spaced* typed critical reviews: on one of the book-length required readings and on one of the paired article-length readings (marked \*\*\*). These papers should review succinctly the main argument and content of the reading(s) and connect this reading(s) to related historiography and to larger questions in the field - and especially those we are discussing in the seminar for that particular session. Along with a summary of the main content of these readings, you should critique these readings in terms of what they contribute or how they complicate the larger historical arguments to which they are connected. These writing assignments are also designed to encourage your preparation for participation in seminar discussions of the readings. You should have your paper on the paired articles available to me to e-mail to class participants at least 24 hours in advance of the class meeting in which we will discuss the papers (by 4:00 pm on Mondays, in other words) - and your paper on the required reading is due at the beginning of the class in which we will discuss the reading.

Even if you are not reviewing a set of "recommended" articles or book chapters for a particular week, you are welcome to read them anyway.

2) You will also be required to complete a 15-20 page paper (35% of your grade) and present a summary of your paper (10% of your grade) to the seminar at the last class session. The content of this paper will be located around an environmental history document of your choice, which should be related to one of the topical areas we review during our seminar meetings. You will need to edit the document, place it in its historical context, and interpret it in terms of larger questions and of several

related studies in environmental history. I will be glad to provide suggestions upon request. You must discuss and clear with me the document that will be the focus of your paper, and should do so *before the end of the fifth week* of the quarter - please make an appointment as soon as possible. Please follow a standard guide to humanities footnotes and bibliography in preparing your paper; I'll provide additional details in the initial meeting of the seminar, and will be glad to answer your questions as we go.

Your presentation at the end of the quarter should be no more than ten minutes long (remember that a double-spaced, typed page takes 2 - 2 1/2 minutes to read at a reasonable pace). Though this presentation should be based on your paper, it should constitute a separate preparation. I'll give you further details about this presentation later in the quarter.

3) We will have some schedule changes along the way, and I will have some announcements relevant to the course - I'll send these to you by way of e-mail. I'll ask you to check your e-mail at least twice a week.

#### Course Schedule:

#### I. Corn, Cows, Germs, Circuits

Tuesday, January 8:

Introduction: Exchanges, Environmental History, and the Meaning of Global

- Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*
- Linda Nash, "The Agency of Nature and the Nature of Agency," *Environmental History* (2004)

Tuesday, January 15:

Corn, Cows, Germs: Biological Exchanges

Required:

- Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism* (cont.)
- William Beinart and Karen Middleton, "Plant Transfers in Historical Perspective: A Review Article," *Environment and History* 10 (2004): 3-29.
- Jim McCann, "Maize and Grace: History, Corn, and Africa's New Landscapes, 1500-1999," *Comparative Study of Society and History* (2002): 246-72.

Recommended:

\*\*\*Alfred Crosby, "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation of North America" *William and Mary Quarterly*, ser. 3, no. 2 (April 1976): 289-99; and David Jones, "Virgin Soils Revisited," *William and Mary Quarterly*, ser. 3 no. 60 (4) (October 2003): 703-742;

\*\*\*or Mart Stewart, "Whether Wast, Deodand, or Stray': Cattle, Culture, and the Environment in Early Georgia," *Agricultural History* (Summer 1991) and Virginia DeJohn Anderson, "Animals into the Wilderness: The Development of Livestock Husbandry in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 59(2) (April 2002): 377-408.

January 22: Science, Colonization, and the Exchange of Plants and Animals

Required:

- Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the British Atlantic World*.

**Recommended:**

- \*\*\*Janet Browne, "Biogeography and Empire," Gillian Beer, "Traveling the Other Way," and Michael T. Bravo, "Ethnological Encounters," in N. Jardine, J.A. Secord, and E. C. Spary, *Cultures of Natural History*, 305-357.

## II. Ideas, Institutions, Economies, Landscape

### January 29: Collecting Animals and Making Zoos

**Required:**

- Nigel Rothfelds, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) (copy on reserve).

**Recommended**

- \*\*\*Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936," *Social Text* 11 (Winter, 1984): 20-64; Warwick Anderson, "Climates of Opinion: Acclimatization in Nineteenth-century France and England," *Victorian Studies* 45 (Winter 1992): 134-57.

### February 5: Transforming Property, Commodifying Nature

**Required:**

- Richard Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World* (Concise Rev. Ed., 2007).

**Recommended:**

- \*\*\*William Cronon, "Bounding the Land," in *Changes in the Land* (Hill and Wang), 54-81; and Pamela McElwee, "You Say Illegal, I Say Legal: The Relationship Between 'Illegal' Logging and Land Tenure, Poverty, and Forest Use Rights in Vietnam," *Journal of Sustainable Forestry*, Vol. 19, No. 1/2/3, 2004 .  
<http://www.haworthpress.com/web/JSF>

### February 12: The Reinvention of the "Authentic" and Environmental Politics

**Required:**

- Shepherd Krech, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (Norton, 1999).

**Recommended:**

- \*\*\*Ronald Niezen, "Recognizing Indigenism: Canadian Unity and the International Movement of Indigenous Peoples," *Comparative Study of Society and History* (2000): 119-148; and William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (Norton, 1996).

## III. Convergences: Exchanges in a Globalized World

### February 19: Local and Global Environmentalisms:

**Required:**

- Ramachandra Guha, *Environmentalism, A Global History* (Longman, 2000)

### February 26: Global Eats, Biting Back

**Required**

- Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*

**Recommended:**

\*\*\*William Boyd, "Making Meat: Science, Technology, and American Poultry Production" *Technology and Culture* 42(4), (October 2001): 631-664; and Harriet Ritvo, "Mad Cow Mysteries," *American Scholar* 67 (Spring 1998).

March 4: No class - work on final papers

March 11: Presentation of paper topics

Final paper due March 20, 4:00 - late papers will not be accepted. Please submit these papers by an attachment to an e-mail, to [Mart.Stewart@wwu.edu](mailto:Mart.Stewart@wwu.edu) and copies to [stewart\\_98225@yahoo.com](mailto:stewart_98225@yahoo.com)